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ABSTRACT

This paper describes types of university supports available for mentoring in one school district. The district created a unique mentoring program to aid first- through third-year teachers in developing pedagogy, professional skills, and characteristics that would enable them to succeed in teaching. The program was developed for preservice teachers seeking preK-4 licensure. Its focus involved the Teacher Work Sample Methodology. One of the project objectives was to design a collaborative effort between a teacher educator, arts and science faculty, and school practitioner to support teacher candidates in their design and implementation of a teacher work sample. Science professors served as science mentors. The subject of science for the mentoring program was chosen because many early childhood graduates lack acumen to teach science to their students in a high quality manner. Student teachers and mentors completed an evaluation form that examined the number and types of contacts between the two groups and contributions the science mentors made to the units. Overall, most student teachers found the support of mentors to be very helpful in increasing their knowledge of the preK-4 science curriculum. The dyads were most effective when the content of the science unit matched the mentor's area of expertise and ability level of classroom students. (SM)

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Tammie Brown
Middle Tennessee State University

ED 480 857

Title: **Promoting quality teachers through a supportive mentoring environment for pre-service and first-year teachers.**

Strand and Area:
Professionalism: How is it best taught or developed?

Summary:
Examples of types of university supports available for mentoring will be shared along with how this system of professional support continues in an area school district. This district has developed a unique mentoring program to aid first-year through third-year teachers to develop pedagogy, professional skills and characteristics that will enable them to succeed in the teaching profession.

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Tammie Brown
Middle Tennessee State University

Title:
Promoting quality teachers through a supportive mentoring environment for pre-service and first-year teachers.

Objectives:

- To share creative mentoring techniques that enhanced pre-service teachers' performance in the pre K-12 classroom.
- To show evidence of a productive mentoring system that continues support after the university with mentoring models developed at the school district.
- To give structure and design to a first-year through third-year mentoring model.
- To link with participants in discussion about other innovative mentoring techniques that would prepare pre-service teachers in pedagogy for a changing diverse classroom.

Relationship of the proposal to the stand:
Professionalism is best taught through example and discussion. Many times pre-service teachers are paired with classroom teachers that are not the best at mentoring professionalism or best practice. Through a structure-mentoring program at the university, the pre-service student can have access to other professionals for support and encouragement. Pre-service teachers face a very diverse and complex classroom. They have to engage the pre K-12 students in content learning while maintaining a professional environment, which encourages community. Many times this creates an isolated situation for the pre-service teacher and for the first year teacher. By following the pre-service teacher into the first year of teaching with school district developed mentoring programs can establish a positive pattern of professional growth.

Summary of presentation:
This session will deliver an approach for supporting the pre-service teacher, which will aid the classroom mentor, university-based mentors, and administrator to function as a professional support system for a pre-service teacher. This collaborative leadership effort will allow for formative assessment to help guide the development of the pre-service teacher in improved teaching quality and professional development. Examples of types of university supports available for mentoring will be shared and how this system of professional support continues in an area school district. The district has developed a unique mentoring program to aid first-year through third-teachers to develop pedagogy, professional skills, and characteristics that will enable them to success in the teaching profession. Details of how the district's program and how it supports the mentoring occurring at the university will be shared.

Plans for participant involvement:
The presenters will share these designs of mentoring for pre-service and first year teachers involving university mentors, classroom teachers, and administrators. The programs and different types of seminar content on development of a professional attitude will be distributed. The session will also include ideas on how to develop and use a mentoring model for participants' pre-service and first-year teachers. This will lead into a time of group discussion concerning possible ways to improve interaction of the mentors or other ways to accomplish pre-service and first-year teacher support.

Mentoring Early Childhood Education Students

by Laurie Katz, Ed.D.

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Mentoring Early Childhood Education Students

by Laurie Katz, Ed.D.

A mentoring program was developed specifically for preservice teachers at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) who are seeking Pre-K – 4th grade license. The mentoring program is part of the Renaissance Partnership Project; a Title II funded project to improve the quality of their graduates and teachers in local partner schools by focusing attention on P-12 student learning. MTSU is one of eleven teacher preparation institutions in ten states participating in this five year initiative. The focus of the project involves the Teacher Work Sample Methodology (TWSM); a process that enables a teacher candidate to demonstrate his/her abilities to plan, implement and evaluate a standards-based unit of instruction for a specific class of students and to facilitate learning for all students. One of the project objectives is to design a collaborative effort of a teacher educator, arts and science faculty, and school practitioner to support teacher candidates in their design and implementation of a teacher work sample. Science professors, as part of MTSU's Arts and Science faculty, were asked to serve as "Science Mentors" in the program.

The subject of science for the mentoring program was chosen because many of the early childhood educators who graduate from MTSU lack acumen to teach science to their students in a high quality manner. Their reasons for this lack of acumen range from inability to translate theories from their preservice science courses into meaningful lessons to lack of opportunities to teach science in their practicum or student teaching placements.

How the mentoring program works

The existing roles that were traditionally held during the student teaching experience (i.e. teacher candidate or student teacher, the cooperating or classroom teacher, and the university supervisor) were modified to accommodate for the mentoring program. The early childhood teacher candidates were required to design and implement a science unit as part of their TWS. Step one occurs during the first week of the student teaching placement. The teacher candidate and classroom teacher decide on a science unit for the teacher candidate to implement as part of the teacher work sample during the first week of the student teaching placement. It is important for the cooperating teacher to have input into this selection because often science units are pre- selected as part of the overall curriculum. Step two involves a program coordinator selecting a science mentor who has expertise on the science topic. The coordinator provides this information to the teacher candidate as well as to the university supervisor. In step three, the teacher candidate contacts the mentor to arrange a meeting at the classroom where the science unit will be implemented. School visits are strongly encouraged except in situations where the teacher candidate's placement is more than 45 minutes from MTSU's campus. A school visit is made by the mentor in step four. The idea of the school visit is that the mentor will have a better understanding of the teacher candidate's classroom (e.g. students' ability levels, ethnicities, socio-economic levels, special needs) and objectives the teacher candidate is trying to achieve from the science unit. With this information, the science mentor provides assistance with the unit. A final contact in step six occurs between the mentor and teacher candidate in order for the mentor to review the teacher

candidate's unit for accuracy of content and make final suggestions before implementation.

Participants

The mentoring program was implemented for fall, 2002 and Spring, 2003 semesters. A total of twenty-eight teacher candidates participated in the mentoring program. They were all seeking early childhood licensure except for one teacher candidate who was seeking kindergarten – eighth grade certification with a kindergarten – fourth grade notation. Seven professors acted as science mentors who were from the following science program areas at MTSU: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics & Astronomy. All the teacher candidates were placed in kindergarten through third grade classrooms for an eight - week period. Science mentors were assigned to 1-4 student teachers per semester according to distance of the school placements, unit topics, and the number of student teachers they were willing to assist. These science professors assumed the role as science mentor in addition to their regular course loads. They received a nominal compensation for their participation. The science unit topics were Animals & Habitats, Plants, Recycling, The Five Senses, Sound, Weather, Space, Wood, Insects, Seasons, Earth & Rocks, and Human Body/Nutrition.

Evaluation Component

Teacher candidates and science mentors completed an evaluation form for the program focusing on a) the number and types of contacts between each teacher candidate and science mentor and b) contributions the science mentors made to the units from the teacher candidate ano science mentor's perspective. Case studies were further developed from mentor/teacher candidate assignments to search for components that fostered

program goals (i.e. increase the teacher candidate's knowledge of implementing a science curriculum in the classroom).

Outcomes

Twenty-six out of twenty-eight mentor-teacher candidate dyads had relationships where the mentors provided information to the teacher candidates regarding their science units. Two of the dyads had no contacts where the mentors advised the teacher candidates. In one of these two dyads the teacher candidate reported leaving a phone message for her mentor and receiving no response. The other dyad reported that an appointment was arranged to meet her mentor at his office but she arrived late and found that the mentor had left. The number of contacts between the twenty-six dyads ranged from 2 – 15 contacts with an average of 4 contacts occurring between the sixteen dyads during the fall '02 semester and an average of 5 contacts occurring between the twenty-six dyads in the spring '03 semester. In-person contacts included meetings at the teacher candidate's classroom placement, the mentor's office and the mentor's home. Other contacts occurred via "email" and phone. The science mentors visited their teacher candidate's classroom in 20 out of the 28 dyads. A school visit was not encouraged where the student teacher was placed more than a 45 minute distance from campus. Other dyads decided a school visit was not necessary to assist with the science unit. All the dyads except for one dyad where school visits occurred reported the mentors' school visits to the classroom very helpful. One teacher candidate and cooperating teacher expressed displeasure with the mentor's mannerisms during the school visit. However, several of the teacher candidates expressed pleasure that their mentors made additional classroom visits to observe the implementation of their units.

The teacher candidates shared that their science mentors contributed to their unit plans in the following ways. First, mentors introduced the use of technology to enhance the science units. For example, one mentor trained the teacher candidate in the use of the Texas Instrument graphing calculator and calculator-based laboratory to enable students to better understand sound waves. Second, mentors provided many hands-on activities related to the science units as well as suggestions on the integration of these activities within the curriculum. Teacher candidates shared with their mentors general ideas for their units but needed direction on concepts they wanted to teach, suggestions for teaching these concepts and during what part of the curriculum these concepts could be taught. For example, one mentor assisted her teacher candidate with activities for teaching about recycling during a social studies block. Third, many teacher candidates had little or inaccurate knowledge about their unit content. Mentors helped dispel myths and provide suggestions that were developmentally appropriate and meet science curriculum competencies or standards. For example, a mentor found that the teacher candidate needed more information about aspects of the weather to make her unit more informative and developmentally appropriate for her kindergarteners. A fourth contribution included mentors providing resources to the teacher candidates in the form of other professionals who could assist them with their units. Teacher candidates invited these professionals to be guests in their classrooms or they asked these professionals for specific information pertaining to their units. The anecdotal below sent by a teacher candidate to her mentor summarizes some of these contributions.

Dr. ___
"Thank you so much for all of your help with my unit. Your ideas and advice really helped a lot. I also want to thank you for suggesting Karen. She did a fabulous job and the kids LOVED her. I also am really considering taking your science course in the near future even though I am graduating this December. I feel like I could really benefit from the course. I would love any information that you give to your classes, such as classroom ideas, in case it does not work out that I can take the class. I am always looking for new, creative ideas to incorporate into the classroom."

What have we learned?

Science professors can serve as vital resources for expanding early childhood educator's knowledge about teaching science. The extent of their assistance appears to be contingent on 1) willingness of the teacher candidate and classroom teacher to incorporate the science mentor's ideas and 2) The relationships that are established between the mentors and the teacher candidates. Because each classroom is different and teacher candidates are at different ability levels, the types of resources provided by the mentor must be flexible to address the uniqueness of each relationship. For example, some teacher candidates may just request websites to research more information about their unit whereas other teacher candidates may want the mentor to demonstrate specific activities to them before they are implemented with their students.

Timing of the assignments

The timing of the teacher candidate/mentor assignments and initial contacts are important to the outcomes of the relationships. Teacher candidates are placed in two placements (about eight weeks each) during their student teaching semester. Early childhood teacher candidates are only required to conduct a unit in one of their placements unless remediation is recommended. Teaching candidates usually conduct their unit plan within the 4-7th week of the first placement. However, some schools have different schedules and teacher candidates may need to implement their units earlier or

later. Two of the teacher candidates who had the same science mentor didn't contact their mentor until they had already begun their unit. These teacher candidates didn't seem to request much assistance from the mentors compared to other mentors who were involved with the teacher candidate during the unit planning. The mentor found it difficult to provide assistance in these situations because the teacher candidates had already designed their units and weren't willing to make changes. It is important that mentors are assigned early in the process so they can provide enough assistance to the teacher candidates before they implement their unit plans. In addition, teacher candidates must be responsible to arrange for in person contacts early in the process.

Characteristics of science mentors

The teacher candidate/mentor assignments seemed to benefit most from the mentor's assistance where the content of the science unit matched the mentor's area of expertise and the ability level of the classroom students. One teacher candidate shares, "It is vital that the mentors are able to bring their college level expertise to the elementary level. Dr. __had no problem doing this and I feel that he played an important part of my sound unit's success." Another teacher candidate shared that her mentor had a lot of knowledge in the area of plants but found it difficult to translate that knowledge to the kindergarten students. Assignments should be thoughtfully made with knowledge of these factors ahead of time and full agreement from the mentors.

Supervision of assignments

Most of the teacher candidates arranged contacts with their science mentors and benefited from the program. Some teacher candidates needed assistance with making contacts or following up with further contacts. A coordinator for the program supervised

the relationships during the fall semester of 2002 placing a fourth person along with the cooperating teacher, teacher candidate, and university supervisor within the model increasing persons who need to be contacted. Most dyads didn't require supervision meaning the teacher candidates were able to receive the type of assistance they needed from their mentors. However, there were several relationships where the teacher candidates had difficulty making contacts with their mentors or didn't fully understand the mentors' roles. In some of the dyads, the mentors weren't able to reach their teacher candidates. Supervision is needed in these situations to maximize the mentors' input. During the spring semester of 2003 the University Supervisors began supervising the dyads of their assigned teacher candidates which relieved the Program Coordinator of some of her responsibilities. Further exploration is needed to expand the University Supervisor's role in this area.

Training for Mentors

The topic of training needs to be further explored to maximize the effectiveness of the dyads. Training needs to be explored on two levels. The first level addresses the need for training of the mentors in the key processes of the Teacher Work Sample Methodology of the Renaissance Program. Some mentors attended an all-day training session while other mentors were explained the program briefly and provided written information by the program coordinator. The second level addresses the roles of the teacher candidate and the mentor. Mentors and teacher candidates were presented a framework of their roles that were interpreted differently by both mentors and teacher candidates. For example, some mentors thought is was important to review the student teacher's science lesson plans while other mentors gave advise in other ways. Some

teacher candidates appreciated their mentors reviewing their science lesson plans while others found this request a duplication of the university supervisor and cooperating teacher's roles. Clarification of roles is needed as to the most effective way(s) to provide assistance that will improve the student teacher's knowledge of science and will in turn impact on student performance.

Receptiveness of classroom teachers

The classroom teachers were considered an important component to the success of this program. Many of the classroom teachers were receptive to the mentors and some shared, as in the anecdotal below shows, how they benefited from the program.

"Dr. ___ was most helpful. For one thing he knew what experiments would work and what wouldn't from the science kit boxes we teach science from. When I explained to him that certain things didn't work, he understood and had great alternatives. Every experiment he shared with us was a hit with the kids. It was so much fun to have a true scientist giving us information and not a textbook or teacher's guides. It was a great experience."

The reasons for the positive attitudes from the classroom teachers may have been due to their own lack of knowledge in the field of science and/or the opportunity to develop the science curriculum in their classrooms. The science curriculum is one area where many school districts allow flexibility. Unfortunately, many teachers view their science background as inadequate to develop a robust science curriculum and they often rely on "science kits." Many of the teachers who were using science kits found that the mentors were able to translate the theoretical concepts from a particular science kit into its application in the classroom.

Summary

A science mentoring program was developed and implemented with preservice teachers in kindergarten – third grade classrooms. Most of the teacher candidates found the support of the mentors very helpful in increasing their knowledge of the science curriculum in kindergarten and the early primary grades. Further study is needed as to the science unit's effectiveness in impacting student performance and how to maximize the input from the science mentors to their teacher candidates.

Mentoring Middle Tennessee State University

Project Goals

- Become accountable for the impact of teacher candidates on P-12 student learning
- Improve teacher performance in key areas and show an increase in teacher's ability to facilitate learning of all students

Project Objectives

- Accountability Systems
- Teacher Work Samples
- Team Mentoring
- Program Redesign
- Networking Across Project Sites
- Research that Links Teacher Performance to P-12 Student Learning

Starting the Process

- Meet with Deans of other colleges involved to secure support faculty

Selecting and Communicating

- Develop mentoring program for the year

Training

- Conduct Training for Teachers, University Supervisors, and Mentors

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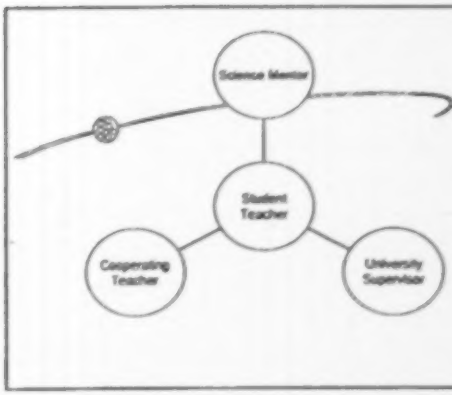
Everyone on the same page?

- Conduct Training for Student Teachers

MENTORING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STUDENTS

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Laurie Katz, Associate Professor

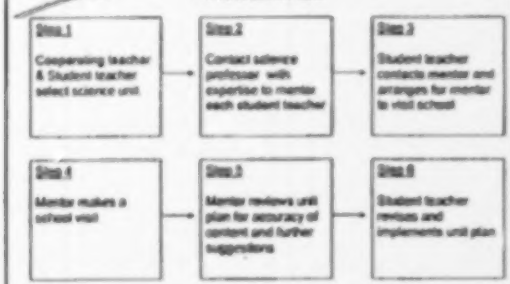


PARTICIPANTS

Semesters Fall, 2002 & Spring, 2003

- 28 Student teachers
  - 27 Pre-K through 4th grade certification
  - 1 K-8 certification (K-4 notation)
- 7 Mentors
  - Science professors (Biology, Chemistry, Physics & Astronomy)

PROCEDURES


Step 1
Cooperating teacher & Student teacher select science unit.
Step 2
Contact science professor with expertise to mentor each student teacher
Step 3
Student teacher contacts mentor and arranges for mentor to visit school
Step 4
Mentor makes a school visit
Step 5
Mentor reviews unit plan for accuracy of content and further suggestions
Step 6
Student teacher revises and implements unit plan

Mentor Assignments

1 – 4 student teachers per mentor

According to:

Distance

Unit topic

Mentor preference

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Student Teacher Questionnaire

1. How many contacts did you have with your mentor? Describe & list the number of in-person, phone, email contacts

2. Did your science mentor come to your student teaching placement? If so, how many times? Briefly describe the contacts. How were these contacts helpful or not helpful?

Student teacher (cont.)

3. How did your science mentor contribute to your unit plan? How was this helpful or not helpful?

4. Suggestions for improving this mentoring experience

Mentor Questionnaire

1. How many contacts did you have with your student teachers? Describe and list the number of in-person, phone, email contacts with each student teacher.
2. Did you attend their student teaching placements? If so, how many times? Briefly describe the contacts. How were these contacts helpful or not helpful to assisting them with their unit plans?

Mentor Questionnaire (cont)

3. How did you contribute to their unit plans?
4. Did you attend the Renaissance Training Program? No__Yes__ If yes, did you find it helpful to the mentoring experience?
5. Suggestions for improving this mentoring experience

Science Unit Topics

- Animals & Habitats
- Plants
- Recycling
- 5 Senses
- Sound
- Weather
- Space
- Wood
- Insects
- Seasons
- Earth & Rocks
- Human Body/ Nutrition

Number of Contacts

(range) 2← →15

Types of Contacts

- School placement
- MTSU Campus
- Mentor's home
- Email
- Phone

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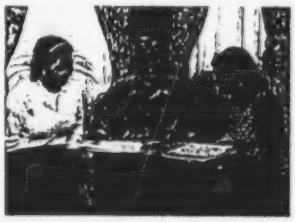

Contributions from the Mentors

- Activities for lessons
- Technology
- Other professionals
- Integrating recycling into social studies lesson
- Science content
- Examined lesson plans and unit
- Resources
- Science Standards

Anecdotals

(from a student teacher)

"It is vital that the mentors are able to bring their college level expertise to the elementary level. Dr. Lee had no problem doing this and I feel that he played an important part of my sound unit's success."

"Dr. Pat,

Thank you so much for all of your help with my unit. Your ideas and advice really helped alot. I also want to thank you for suggesting Karen. She did a fabulous job and the kids LOVED her. I also am really considering taking your science course in the nearfuture even though I am graduating this December. I feel like I could really benefit from the course. I would love any information that you give to your classes, such as classroom ideas, in case it does not work out that I can take the class. I am always looking for new, creative ideas to incorporate into the classroom."

What have we learned?

- **Better understanding of teaching science**
- **Increased understanding between science and ECE professors**
- **Timing is important**
- **Matching is important**
  - **Subject area**
  - **Grade level**
- **Revision of student teacher and mentoring roles**

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ATE 2003

Roberta H. Hill, Ed.D.
HR Supervisor
Franklin Special School District
Franklin, Tennessee

1

Introduction

- Franklin Special School District
- 3900 students
- 250 teachers
- District has been on the Cutting Edge due to awareness of leadership

2

District Wide Induction Program

- All new and beginning teachers to district are required to participate
- Inaugural summer for one year, district decided to extend for three years until teacher receives tenure
- Major challenge was trying to support two different school calendars
- Induction program has three components

3

First Component

- Orientation
- Held two or three days before school opens
- Welcome from Director, Associate Directors, and School Board Chair
- Technology
- Special Education and English Language Learner
- Curriculum
- Classroom Management
- Parent Teacher Conferences
- Business Side
- Meet Mentors
- Tour of City

4

Second Component

- Subsequent Sessions held throughout the school year
- Cultural Diversity
- Stress Management
- Teaching Strategies
- Spring IEP meetings
- Year end celebration
- 2 days immediately following close of the school year

5

Component Three

- Mentors
- By far a key component
- Sharon Hargrave, mentor and mentor trainer and coordinator for the district

6

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THE Mentor

Sharon Hargrave
Franklin Special School District, Franklin, TN.

1. Characteristics of Good Mentors:
   a. approachable
   b. able to listen
   c. high integrity and sincerity
   d. willingness to spend time
   e. enthusiastic and positive
   f. flexible
   g. tactful
   h. experience in teaching
   i. trustworthy and able to maintain confidentialities
2. Mentors' Roles
   a. informal aquaintance time in preservice/orientation
   b. needs-assessment
   c. focused growth plan
   d. time with the novice
   e. informal observations
3. Collaborating Time for Mentors
   a. BANTIP session trainers
   b. training sessions for mentors–Meeting of the Mentor Minds
   c. problem solving
4. Ideal Mentoring Situation
   a. the hiring system is part of the University mentoring team of the student teacher
   b. Renaissance Project advantage

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Sincerely,

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